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EPISTLE

TO

Mrs. M*LL*R,

(INSTITUTRESS of a POETICAL SOCIETY near BATH)

IN WHICH IS INCLUDED A

COMPARISON

BETWEEN THE

ANTIENT and MODERN TIMES;

Being a Subject propoſed in the foregoing Year.

Favete Linguis. HOR.

BATH:

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M.DCC.LXXVI.

(Price SIX-PENCE.)

EPISTLE

TO

MRS. M**LL*R.

(Mistress of a POLITICAL SOCIETY near BATH)

IN WHICH IS INCLOSED A

COMPARISON

BETWEEN THE

ANCIENT and MODERN TIMES;

Being a Subject proposed in the foregoing Year.

BY

BRITISH MUSEUM

EPISTLE

TO

Mrs. M*LL*R, &c.

BRIGHT ſtar of poeſie! by fortune plac'd
To ſhine ſupreme in elegance and taſte;
True wit to favour, genius to extend,
The Poet's patroneſs, the Muſes friend:
Whoſe orb revives, beneath its ſheltering rays
The long loſt glories of the wither'd bays;
O deign awhile in thy belov'd retreat,
(Where grace and beauty, wit and genius meet)

To hear attentive, whilſt thy fame I paint,
Tho' ſure ſuch ſketches muſt be far too faint;
'Tis not for me with juſtice to declare,
How much you ſhine confeſt beyond compare—
That arduous taſk to others I reſign;
Content—if you a gracious ear incline;
Then grant my pray'r, nor aid benign refuſe,
To you alone I call—my heav'nly Muſe;
O guide my wand'ring footſteps while I ſing,
Teach me aright to tune th' harmonious ſtring;
Teach me,—like thee,—to ſcorn the beaten road
By unambitious ſouls ignobly trod;
So ſhall my Muſe in many a tuneful line,
Surpaſs *the *Mantuan Bard* in bold deſign;
And riſe aloft in high and proud career;
Demanding audience from the gracious ear
Of thoſe, whom all th' admiring world admit
Judges profound of ſcience, taſte, and wit.

There was a time—ſuch times exiſt no more—
E'er faſhion deign'd to viſit Britain's ſhore;

* Virgil.

E'er vulgar minds were ripen'd into taſte,
Or round-ear'd caps, and pinners were diſgrac'd;
When ruddy Phillis in her homeſpun gown,
And ſimple garb could charm her fav'rite clown;
At ruſtic wake, each homely youth and maid
Together flock'd beneath the beechen ſhade,
There led the dance in many a jovial round
Mov'd by the grumbling bagpipes lofty ſound,
Then ſober folks an idle hour would fill
At ſhilling Whiſt, or three-penny Quadrille,
For Dice were not—nor yet the art they knew
Of loſing thouſands every night at Eu;
Or riſking millions at a ſingle blow,
And placing lands, woods, rivers at a throw;
Now—ſhould we meet with an unlucky run
Or at one ſetting *nobly* be undone;
No longer life's dull ſtate we can endure
While eaſe and freedom—piſtols can procure.—
And (thanks to Gallia—for from her we learn
True taſte and ſpirit rightly to diſcern)

This iron age departed, we behold
An age of pleaſure, luxury, and gold;
No more exiſt thoſe oppoſites to *Life*
A ſocial huſband, and domeſtic wife;
No more thoſe vulgar joys that charm'd of yore,
So juſtly exil'd from our poliſh'd ſhore:
Triumphal entries, and their dull parades,
Are chang'd for Op'ras, Balls, and Maſquerades;
No longer Sunday's dull employment cloys,
For Church we ſubſtitute politer joys:
To hit each palate ſure, however nice,
For here are Concerts gay—there Cards and Dice—
Not thus our rude forefathers ſpent their days
(An age uncouth, which ſome have dar'd to praiſe)
Had they been born in theſe our better times,
Enrich'd by cuſtoms brought from foreign climes,
(For thoſe who viſit courtly France or Rome,
Are ſure to bring ſome new invention home)
They'd ſcorn'd their ſports—ſo foreign to the mind
By diſſipation ſoften'd and refin'd.

Come then, prolific fancy, hither haſte,
Improve Britannia with thy boundleſs taſte
O deign awhile t' expand thy varied ſtore,
And on our rip'ning minds thy bleſſings pour:
She comes, ſhe comes obedient to our call,
Her faithful vot'ries crowd the feſtive Ball;
(Not ſuch in antient days the boaſt of man)
The fair *Priſcilla tow'ring in the van;
Whoſe graceful plumage nodding from on high
Compleats the certain triumphs of her eye.
But who with M---re majeſtic can compare?
What form ſo lovely, or what nymph ſo fair?
Not Helen's ſelf, whoſe love-inſpiring charms
For ten long years could ſet the world in arms;
Nor with ſuch grace of old, did Cynthia move,
As this ſweet rival of the queen of love.

See thro' the crowd a radiant band appears:—
Not ſuch the graces in th' immortal ſpheres;

* Lady Pr. B-rt-e

Nor ſuch the goddeſſes on lofty *Ide*,
(As Poets ſing) the conteſt to decide:
Firſt, matchleſs W--rr--n of ſuperior grace,
Compleat in perſon, elegant in face:—
With Wro-ght-n next, ſo oft the Poets theme,
Whoſe name reſounds near *Avon's* winding ſtream:
But chief to thee, all graceful *W-ſt belong
Th' harmonious tribute of each tuneful ſong;—
How needleſs here, the varied toils of art,
T' improve or decorate each lovely part,
For nature's charms compleatly form the whole,
Illume the eye, and animate the ſoul.—
Hail nymphs divine! to whom 'tis giv'n to wound,
With darts of love to deal deſtruction round;
For whom my Muſe bemir'd in proſe ſo long,
Again ſhall riſe among the rhyming throng.
And tho' an humble Bard, in humble verſe
Your various charms unequall'd, I rehearſe;

* Lady Frances W-ſt.

Smile on my weak attempts with look benign,
And fire my Muſe with energy divine.

But ſee in S-ym--r's beauteous form array'd,
Where fair perfection amply is diſplay'd:
Bright Faſhion's ſelf, to our requeſts inclin'd,
Reviſits BATH, to teach and bleſs mankind:
In whom a nymph compleatly we behold
Caſt in true fancy's ſweet and modiſh mold,
Where art, with nature blended well, conſpires
To kindle love, and fan up all its fires.

E'en thoſe muſt own, who diſtant ages praiſe,
Such beauty liv'd not in remoter days;
Nor could the charms of roſe-lip'd *Hebe* vie
With the mild radiance of ſweet K-pp-l's eye;
Or gentle H-yw--d, in whoſe beauteous face
Beams white-rob'd innocence, and inborn grace—.
Not then did fancy, faſhion's child, impart
That taſte, which guides love's arrows to the heart.

Nor Flow'rs, Fruit, Paint, or Feathers then were known,
But beauty's bloom, fair nature, was thy own.

Receive, bright Patroneſs, the glory due
From ev'ry Bard and ev'ry Nymph to you;
And as yourſelf inſpir'd theſe artleſs lays
Accept this tribute of poetic praiſe.—
Whilſt like Mæcenas in th' Auguſtan age,
You trace the wonders of each tuneful page;
And ſhine unmatch'd in old or modern time,
A friend of Genius, Pleaſure, Taſte, and Rhime,
Which daily thrive beneath thy foſt'ring hand,
And pour the tide of learning o'er the land:—
Uncurb'd by fear of ignominious ſhame,
I dare to paint in verſe thy riſing fame;
And as, the grov'ling herd deſpis'd, you ſoar
Thro' worlds unknown, and tracks untrod before,
On vent'rous wing attendant will I ſail,
Purſue thy path, partake each friendly gale:—
But thou, my Guide, Inſtructreſs, and my Friend,
With counſel ſage, my daring flights attend;

Direct my wings with caution bold, to ſhun
The moiſt'ning waves below, or melting ſun,
Leſt like *_the advent'rous Youth_ I raſhly fall
And juſtly prove the ridicule of all.

Far be ſuch fate,—and may thy youthful Bard
Meet from thy bounteous hand his juſt reward;
O may his ſtrains thy grace and favour gain,
(A prize, which kings might glory to obtain,—)
Around his brows thy _Myrtle Wreaths_ entwine,
So ſhall his Fame encreas'd with brighter honours ſhine.

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* Icarus.

F I N I S.

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